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Is There a Relationship Between Home Literacy Environments  
and First Grade Reading Levels?

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the connection between home literacy environments and first grade children's reading levels. The study used the Fountas and Pinnell's (Heinemann, n.d.) Benchmark Assessment System 1 to assess the reading levels of thirteen first grade students. The Familia Inventory (Taylor, 1996/2000) parent survey was used to assess home learning environments. On average, children that read on or above grade level live in homes where there is more parental modeling of literacy behaviors. School and public libraries are also used more frequently in the homes of children reading on or above grade level.

Keywords: first grade, home literacy environment, reading levels

## **Home Literacy Learning Environments and Children's Reading Levels**

### **Introduction**

One in every six children that are not reading on grade level by the time they finish third grade will not graduate high school (Children's Literacy Foundation, 2017). The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) expresses the concern that not all parents know the significance of children reading at a proficient level by the end of third grade. All parents want the best for their child. However, not every parent has the confidence or prior experiences to know how to support their child's reading development. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) suggests before we blame parents or assume they should know better, we should work with families to help them understand the significance of reading daily to their child. Data from the National Household Education Survey (NHES) found that less than half of children ages birth to 4 are read to daily (Child Trends, 2015). Further research finds an association between the size of a child's home library and the child's reading scores (van Bergen, Zuijen, Bishop & de Jong, 2016). Reading is Fundamental (RIF), a national advocacy organization reminds us, "Literacy begins with parental involvement – often, reading aloud – and continues with the development of a genuine enjoyment of reading." (Reading is Fundamental, n.d.). van Buregen et al. (2016) suggest the size of the home library may be important because it may be reflective of parental influences and opinions on literacy behaviors, including the frequency which they read to their child.

Epstein (2010) identifies parent involvement as six different components. Directly related to home literacy learning environments are the dimensions of parenting and learning at home (Epstein, 2010, pp. 85). Epstein (2010) and Bronfenbrenner (1994) emphasize the importance of parental involvement, parental behavior, and the home learning environment on children's development. They both note the impact these variables have on a child's educational outcomes.

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological model incorporates understanding of how ecological events of a child's life influence the child's development. When considering the home learning environment, Bronfenbrenner's model considers the role of the microsystem. The family is a part of the child's microsystem. The way a family creates learning environments at home may influence the child's educational achievement. The child's microsystem is also the school environment. The child's mesosystem is formed when home and school work together. This can happen when the child's home learning environment is created or supported. If the parent is unsure how to structure a home learning environment, the parent can reach out to the teacher/school to look for support for ideas or resources. However, as described by The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010), the teacher may need to reach out to the family to help support the parents in providing an environment that is conducive to learning.

Another one of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological system's that effects the child is the exosystem. The part of the exosystem that relates to a child's home literacy environment is the parent's work. If a parent's work schedule is long hours, late nights, and when the child is not in school, the parent would have a difficult time incorporating an appropriate home learning environment that is supportive of their child's academic needs.

This study will focus on home literacy environments in first grade families. The study will compare various aspects of the home learning environment and how they affect children's reading performance at school. The study compares children that are reading below grade level and children that are reading on/above grade level utilizing a parent survey and a standardized reading assessment.

### **Literature Review**

This review of literature examines studies conducted in international locations such as Canada, England and Germany. The studies examine home literacy environments and children's reading levels at various points in development. The goal of this review was to understand what other researchers learned through parent surveys about home literacy environments, what supported children's reading development, and how parental influence impacted learning.

#### **Home Literacy Environments and Children's Literacy Development**

**International Studies.** Multiple studies conducted examined the home literacy environment of young children by utilizing parent surveys. Senechal (2006) investigated 65 children from the spring of kindergarten until the end of fourth grade in French Canadian families. She examined the connection between kindergarten literacy skills and home environments, first grade reading and spelling skills, and fourth grade reading comprehension, spelling, reading for enjoyment, as well as fluency skills in reading. The purpose of her study was to identify if children with a strong home literacy environment in kindergarten performed on grade level with literacy skills in fourth grade. This study required participating families to answer survey questions asking parents about the amount of time their child spent with books, how frequently they read to their child and their use of explicit teaching of reading and writing activities at home. Senechal (2006) found children in home literacy environments in kindergarten had higher literacy skills in kindergarten. These advanced skills in kindergarten continued through fourth grade. When home literacy environment children in kindergarten reached fourth grade, they had advanced reading fluency and spelling skills compared children that averaged lower home literacy environment scores in kindergarten. The more frequently these activities took place, the higher the child's literacy skills were.

Yeo, Ong, and Ng (2014) found that in order for a home literacy environment to be effective, parents needed to engage their child in the actions of reading and writing. Researchers discovered when parents read and worked on writing skills at home their kindergarten child, the child had the strongest correlation of reading, spelling, oral expression, listening comprehension, and comprehension of reading.

Ciping, Silinskis, Wei, and Georgiou (2015) looked at first and second grade children and their families in China to better understand the connection between home learning environments and children's academic success in the classroom. The study asked 177 Mandarin-speaking Chinese families to complete a survey to identify family history and how often parents involved their child in home literacy activities. In the survey, parents answered questions regarding their demographic characteristics, the number of times their child engaged in home reading with a parent, and how frequently a parent instructed literacy skills in the home. By second grade, parents significantly reduced parental involvement in literacy activities in the home, including informal reading, such as reading to the child over the weekend (Ciping et al., 2015). Ciping et al., (2015) as well as Silinskis et al. (2012) note this is likely due to children reading independently by the time they reach second grade. However, they found children with inadequate reading skills at the start of first grade were more likely to have a parent spend time with them teaching comprehensive literacy skills.

In Canada, Kirby and Hogan (2008) implemented a survey over the telephone. In an attempt to understand how first grade children's phonological processing and home learning environments were connected, researchers asked parents to identify their demographic characteristics, as well identify the number of books in the home, how frequently the adults in the home participated in reading activities and children's early reading skills. After completing

the parental survey, Kirby and Hogan (2008) evaluated their reader's literacy levels with a variety of subtest scores. The tests measured word identification, reading scores, and phonological scores. Based on these scores, researchers labeled the child participants to ensure that the study consisted of a variety of readers. All readers in the study were labeled as good readers or poor readers. Families of children labeled as good readers had a higher number of books in the home than poor readers reported. In their study, they discovered children in the good reader's category were read to by an adult at home more frequently. Kirby and Hogan (2008) learned that good readers were also taught letter sounds, how to read unfamiliar words, taught letters in print and engaged in memory games in their home learning environment much more often than poor readers were. It is the explicit teaching with literacy activities in the home that resulted in advanced reading levels for some good readers. Similarly, Hindman and Morrison (2012) observed that a child's home learning environment significantly impacted their understanding of the alphabet and decoding of words in preschool.

Researchers Melhuish and Phan (2008) used a 14 item interview in England; seven questions were focused on social activities or routines for children. These activities included, playing with friends, routine bedtime, and sitting together as a family to eat meals at home. Researchers found no significant relationship between these activities and children that are over or under achieving in literacy skills at age five. Researchers did however find that children from a strong home literacy environment as reported in the interview by questions such as going to the library, singing songs, reading poems, and being read to on a regular basis by a parent, resulted in 76% of seven-year-old children performing at the expected reading level for their age.

Contrary to the findings of several researchers, in Finland, Silinskas et al. (2012) found children's reading scores declined as the frequency of reading at home increased. Both male and



female children's reading scores declined the more children engaged in reading lessons in their home learning environment. However, researchers discovered children that are strong word readers at the start of kindergarten have been taught reading and been read to at home by a parent.

**United States.** In addition to examining demographic information and parent-reported home literacy environments, Huntsinger, Jose, and Luo (2016) asked Chicago and Philadelphia parents to identify parental feelings about their child's literacy skills and to rate their children's interest in reading and writing at home. The goal of the study was to identify which home learning experiences assisted children in developing literacy skills. Huntsinger et al. (2016) found that parents who participated in comprehension building skills at home, had children with more advanced assessment scores for meaning, alphabet, and activities within the assessment that focused on conventions.

Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines, and Vernon-Feagans (2015) focused their research on children living in rural areas and living in poverty. They found in the southeastern part of the United States that children living in homes that provided homework support was the number one home literacy environment activity with 90% of the children that participated in the study receiving homework help at least two times each week. Paired with over 75% of participating children having someone that reads to them, and supports their learning to read at least twice a week, research shows that regardless of poverty level and access to materials, all children can learn. Much like the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) discusses, it is important to provide families with the necessary supports, and when this is done, the home learning environment is a powerful tool in supporting literacy development in all children.

### **Interventions to Support Home Learning Environments**

The use of parent surveys to further understand how home literacy environments effect literacy development in children has been researched by various people. Niklas and Schneider (2014) examined whether providing families with literacy interventions changes or improves the literacy development in kindergarten children. Researchers offered two interventions to 109 families in Germany. The first intervention was a 40-minute parent evening that was conducted three nights in one week. The purpose of the intervention was to provide parents with information on how to enhance or create a home literacy learning environment. Parents were provided with specific ways to support their child's literacy learning at home. The second intervention was a 30-minute session provided for parents with their child. To start, the parent read to the child while a trained research assistant observed the interactions that took place during the reading. The research assistant watched to see if the parent asked the child questions about the text or illustrations as they were reading or if the parent engaged the child in another way. Researchers were also looking to see if the parent appeared engaged in the reading with the child. After the second intervention, guidance was provided to the parent to help create an understanding of a strong shared reading experience. Both interventions were optional, and only 37.6% of parents who participated in the study took advantage of both intervention sessions. Niklas and Schneider (2014) found the only significant impact made on home learning environments was the group of families that attended all interventions offered in the study.

### **Findings**

The resources reviewed provide an overwhelming amount of support for home literacy environments impacting children's reading levels. Through parent surveys, researchers were able to learn what home supports best serve children's ability to be reading on grade level. Most of the

studies above found some positive correlation of how home literacy environments support children. The specific tasks that were found as most helpful ranged between studies. Senechal's (2006) findings revealed that a variety of home literacy supports such as reading books, and teaching reading and writing in the home not only supported children's kindergarten skills, but influenced fourth grade reading skills. Additional longitudinal studies such as these are important to understand early impacts on reading skills for children. Looking at home literacy environments early on in a child's education is important. As Ciping et al. (2015) found when families provide a home literacy environment early on for their child they become less involved as their child reaches older grades due to the independence and strong literacy foundation skills the child has. Waiting to conduct research in a second grade classroom or later may impact findings.

Contrary, Silinskas et al. (2012) was the only study reviewed that displayed a negative relationship between the home literacy environment and a child's reading level compared to grade level expectation. Further research using the same survey and methods could be used to evaluate a different sample.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine if there is a relationship between home literacy environments and first grade reading levels. The independent variable is the home literacy environment. It will be defined as home or community opportunities which involve literacy through speaking, listening, reading, writing, or experiences which build on the child's education that parents engage in with their child. The dependent variable of first grade reading levels will be defined by district standards where this study was conducted. Children reading level G or above are reading on and above grade level. Children reading level F or below are reading below grade level. It is hypothesized that children that children reading on or above grade level live in homes

where they read daily, and have parents which support school. This hypothesis is due to previous experiences with families of children reading on grade level.

## **Methods**

### **Population, Sampling Strategy, and Participants**

The sample for this study was recruited using convenience sampling. Prior to recruiting participants for the study, the Instructional Review Board (IRB) approved this quantitative action research study within a first grade classroom. The children and families that were invited to participate in the study were the first grade students of the researcher. The children that participated in the study ranged in age from 6 years 5 months to 7 years 5 months. There were 6 male students and 7 female students that participated in the study. The children in the classroom were Caucasian, and bi-racial (Caucasian/African American). Of the 13 participating families, seven children were from two parent homes. Four children live in homes with one parent, and two children were from homes of either their guardians or their adoptive parents.

The study took place at an elementary school in New England which serves children who live in rural and urban neighborhoods. The school population is approximately 300 students in first, second and third grade. Due to the level of poverty in the district, all children receive free breakfast and lunch. The state average for children that were eligible for free and reduced lunch was 45.6% in the 2015-2016 school year. In the same school year, almost 70% of children in the school district qualified for free or reduced lunch (Data Warehouse, 2015). From 2008-2012, the county had more homes living in poverty at 17.5% than the national average of 13.8% of homes (KVCAP, 2015).

## Instruments

**Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Tool.** To gather reading assessment data, the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 1 was used. This assessment tool was part of the educational practice in the first grade classroom. The assessment was administered by the teacher or one Reading Recovery (Title One) teacher in the school. The Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment comes as a boxed kit. The texts in the kit have been utilized since January 2007 (Heinemann, n.d.). The classroom teacher (or reading teacher) selects one book, alternating from non-fiction and fiction each time the assessment is given to a child. The teacher selects a level book based on previous testing data and what the child demonstrates he or she is able to read in a guided reading group. Each text book is labeled with a letter in the alphabet. Benchmark Assessment System 1 ranges from level A text to level N text. Starting with level A and progressing in alphabetical order, the text in each book gets progressively more difficult. Children in kindergarten are expected to read level A-C (level D according to the school district where the research took place) and level B-I (D-J as stated by the school district) (Heinemann, n.d.).

Each text level has two books; a fiction and a non-fiction text. Every text has a matching assessment. The teacher reads the introduction printed on the assessment sheet to the student prior to the student beginning to read. For reading level J and above the teacher uses a timer to record the child's words per minute read. For all reading levels, the teacher listens to the child read. The child reads the text out loud to the teacher. The teacher documents errors, self-corrections, and word omits on the assessment form. At the end of the assessment, the teacher counts the total number of errors, self-corrections, and words per minute (if applicable). If the child's score ranks above 90% reading accuracy, the teacher continues to assess child

understanding by conducting a comprehension conversation with the child. The comprehension conversation for each child was not used in this study, other than the teacher used the comprehension questions and reading accuracy to decide if a child should move up (or down) a reading level. Children that read at an accuracy level of 90-94% and had a comprehension score of five (out of seven), were tested at the next level. Children that had an accuracy reading score of 95-100% and had a comprehension level of 4 (out of seven) or higher were to be assessed at the next level (Heinemann, n.d.).

***Instrument Administration, Reliability, and Validity.*** When administering the Fountas & Pinnell assessment, all educators are expected to complete the assessment honestly and as described. Assessment administrators are expected to follow the directions on the assessment model. When asking comprehension questions, administrators may re-word the way the question is asked, but not in a leading way (Fountas and Pinnell Literacy, 2016). All teachers have been trained to correctly administer the assessment. Fountas & Pinnell state that through research, they discovered children that were involved in comprehension conversations tend to provide more understanding of the content because a conversation allows teachers to rephrase the question if necessary, but not to rephrase in a leading way (Fountas & Pinnell Literacy, 2016).

This assessment is a standardized reading assessment and used school-wide. In the district where the research took place, all teachers in the district enroll in a course called Literacy Teaching and Learning in Primary Classrooms. This graduate level course is taught by the district academic coach. The class provides new to the district teachers with training, videos, and modeling of the Fountas & Pinnell Assessment Benchmark System 1 administration. The coach works individually with each teacher until the teacher feels confident and shows proper

understanding of administering the assessment. With the exception of three children, all children took the reading assessment in the classroom environment. Each child that completed the assessment in the classroom worked one on one with the teacher while the remaining students worked independently on literacy stations. The conditions in which children took the assessment in were similar conditions to the general environment during guided reading time.

To ensure validity of the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, a variety of formative assessments were completed throughout the United States in authentic environments with educators. There was also a formative evaluation conducted. Since the evaluation was conducted as children used the program, the feedback from the field allowed creators of the program to make changes as necessary in a reasonable amount of time. To evaluate the final formative assessments, an independent data-analysis team was hired to ensure validity and reliability within the entire benchmark assessment system (Heinemann, n.d.).

In the current study, the selection sample is small (13), and the selection could be an internal threat to the study since participants are not selected at random. Other internal threats to validity could be related to the child's mood that day or other significant life changes (which the teacher knows from conversations with parents, at least 2 children were undergoing changes such as parent separation or anxiety regarding attending school). Many children also had absences due to sickness around the time of testing. Another internal threat to the validity of this assessment is the volume level of the classroom. Some children took the assessment in a louder environment than other children. Some children may have had interruptions during the assessment from teachers entering the classroom or other classmate interruptions.

**The Familia Inventory.** The Familia Inventory (Taylor, 1996/2000) was modified and used with families in a survey form for this study. The purpose of implementing the survey

was to get a stronger understanding of home literacy learning environments of first grade children. The survey was sent home with every child in the classroom but one. The child that did not take the survey home is non-verbal and does not participate in guided reading (or Fountas & Pinnell testing) in the general education classroom. The Familia Inventory asks families to answer 57 questions on a 0-5 rating scale ranging from never to daily. The 57 questions fit into ten subscales of six questions in each subscale. Seven of the subscales were used in the survey. Family work and play was asked in three questions and addressed how the family interacts. The use of school and community library was asked and parental modeling of reading were both answered with five questions each. Three questions were addressed specifically to practical reading in the home for purposes such as solving problems or fixing things. Five questions were devoted to how often families read together in shared reading environments. Another area that was focused on was parental support of school. Survey respondents answered five questions that focused on the connections made with their child's school. Singing songs together and talking with the child was surveyed with four questions that were identified as verbal interaction (Taylor, 1996/2000, p. 7,9). A total of 32 questions were used in the survey. A copy of the parent survey can be found in appendix A.

***Instrument Administration, Reliability and Validity.*** Taylor (1996/2000) states clearly that no one survey will evaluate all home literacy environments in families. The Familia Inventory is divided into age groups to look more closely at the reliability. The age group of children ages 6-9 for the second part of the study (the 57 rating scale questions) is a correlation between subscales of .8517 (Taylor, 1996/2000). Threats to internal validity for this measure included families could have reported the ideal home literacy situation instead of the reality of their practices. Another internal validity concern is that not all parents completed this survey in the same



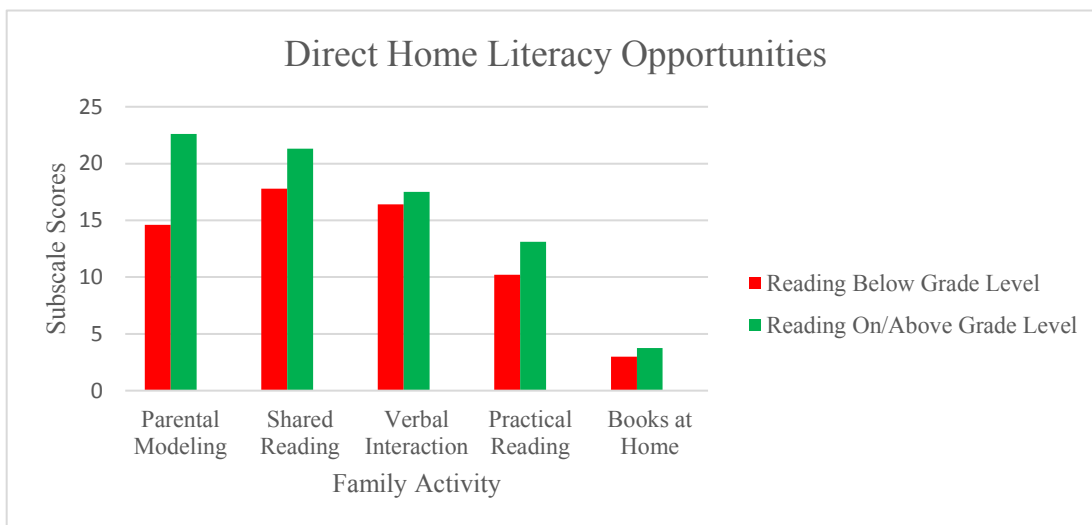
environment since all surveys were sent home with children. The time that the child's family member completed the survey is also an internal validity factor. Some parents could have completed the survey late at night or after working all day compared to parents that may not work or were able to complete the questions earlier in the evening.

## Results

Figure 1 presents direct home literacy opportunities. These are home literacy activities that happen inside the home with the child. Generally, these opportunities involve the parent (or another adult living inside the home) and the child only. Figure 2 presents community literacy activities that are shared between the child and the family. These are events that require families to leave the home, or communicate with people outside of the home to help support their child's education.

### Direct Home Literacy Opportunities

Figure 1



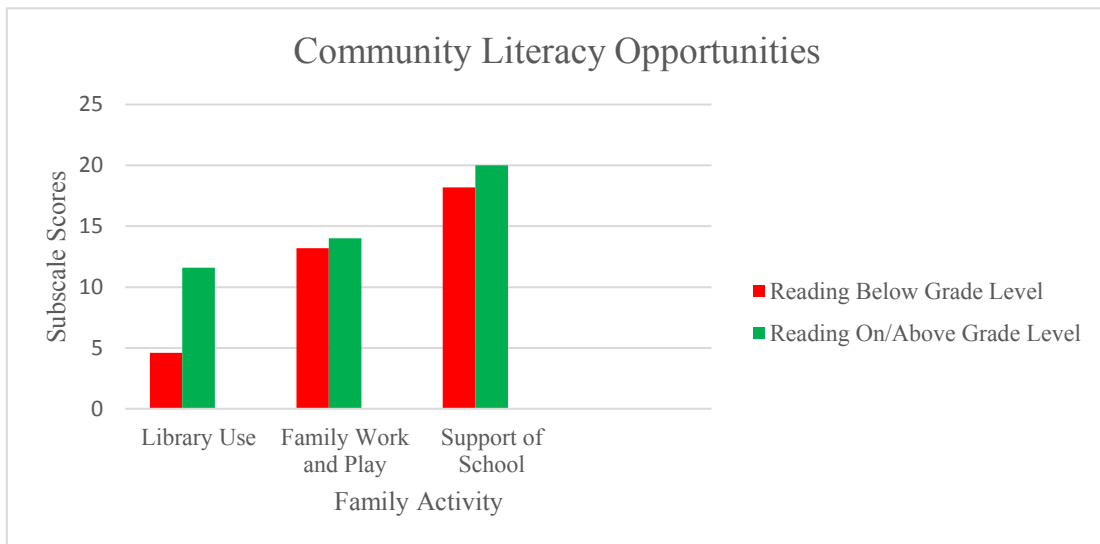
This study found children that live in homes with parental modeling are more likely to be reading on or above grade level than those reading below grade level. Children that are reading

below grade level have parental modeling mean score of 14.6 out of 25. Children that are reading on or above grade level have a mean score of parental modeling 22.6 out of 25. As seen below in Figure 1, there was also a noticeable difference in practical reading between children that are reading below grade level and children that are on or above grade level.

As seen in Figure 1, there is little difference in the number of books at home between children that are reading below grade level and children reading on or above grade level.

### Community Literacy Opportunities

Figure 2



Children reading on or above grade level are more likely to access the library in the school and/or community. This score could be skewed due to unclear questions regarding the type of library that is accessed. The question was intended to reference the use of the public library when these questions were asked on the survey. However, this was not clearly stated. Some families interpreted the word library to mean both public and school based and other participants thought it meant public library only. This could potentially have changed parent answers if the question clearly stated public or community library.

**Parental Modeling**

When asked if the adults in the home enjoy reading, 40% of the children reading below grade level live in a home where the adults enjoy reading daily compared to the 63% of adults that enjoy reading in homes where children are reading on or above grade level. Seventy-five percent of parents read magazines, newspapers, books, etc. in front of their on or above grade level reading child daily. The remaining 25% of on or above grade level children witness an adult in the home reading these materials once or twice a week. Sixty percent of below level readers live in homes where adults read these materials once a month or less.

**Shared Reading**

Out of all of the survey respondents, 69% reported their child is read to by older family members in the home at least once a week. There is no great difference between on or above level and below level readers in the home literacy environment.

**Verbal Interaction**

All families reported talking with their child about people and places in the community at least twice a month and also talk with their child at least twice a month about the type of television shows being viewed and what they are about. Of the 100% of families that talk with their child at least twice a month about the television shows they watch, 38% of respondents talk with their child daily. As shown in Figure 1, both children reading below grade level, and children reading on or above grade level have similar verbal interaction scores.

**Practical Reading**

The use of practical reading is evident in 62% of families as they access materials such as books or magazines on a daily basis. One child that is reading below grade level lives in a home where books and magazines that are in the home are utilized daily.

**Books at Home**

There is a small difference between below reading level and on or above reading level and the number of books at home. Children that are reading below grade level have an average score of 3; this identifies they have approximately 51-74 books in the home. Children reading on or above grade level have an average score of 3.75 books at home. This means on or above grade level children range from 51-74 books to 75 – 100 or more books at home. Two below level readers have less than 75 books in the home. One family identified 0-24 books in the home and a second family identified they have 25-50 books. All children reading on or above grade level with the exception of one reported having 75-100 or more books in the home.

**Family Work and Play**

One hundred percent of parent participants responded that their family spends time together at least once or twice a week. Seventy-seven percent of families reported their family spends time together daily. In addition to family work and play, 100% of participants shared that the child is asked to explain understanding of tasks and how things work at least once a week.

**Library Use**

As explained above, the use of the library interpretation is scattered as some families identified school as the library they were referring, and other families stated that their child does not access a library at all. All first grade students spend 30 minutes in the school library with their classmates. When specifically asked about accessing the public library, 31% of families shared that they use the library once a month or more. The remaining participants reported never using the public library. Twenty-three percent of participants reported their child has accessed library programs such as story hour or summer reading programs.

**Support of School**

The overall percentage of children that are supported in their daily homework in the home was 77%. Out of all participants, 92% of parents talk with their child about their school day daily. The remaining 8% reflect with their child about their school day once or twice a week. Similar to 100% of parents talking with their child once a week or more about their school day, 100% of parents talk with their child about feelings about their classmates and teacher(s).

**Discussion**

The results indicate that parental support of a home literacy environment, as well as family-literacy experiences in the community positively influences children's reading development. This study does not indicate if a child has a strong home literacy environment than they will automatically be on or above grade level. The study presents that on average, readers with a strong home literacy environment are more likely to be reading on or above grade level in first grade.

**Summary**

A supportive home literacy environment in this study was defined as adults in the home participating in parental modeling and practical reading (reading to learn new skills or information), supporting the child's education, reading together with the child (shared reading) as well as the number of children's books in the home. This study found that 62% of first grade students with a supportive home literacy environment were reading on grade level by January of first grade. This data was calculated from the children that were reading on or above grade level out of the total number of children that participated in the study. This average is lower than the 76% Melhuish and Phan (2008) found for 7-year-old children reading on grade level. Contrary to Silinskas et al. (2012) research findings of home literacy environments causing children's

reading scores to decrease, this study demonstrates that home literacy environments are important to literacy development in first grade children. Based on findings from this study, the use of the library, both community and school based is important for literacy development in first grade children. This study also revealed that parental modeling is an important factor when considering what a supportive home literacy environment entails. This study revealed that when looked at individually, support of school has little impact on a child's reading skills in first grade.

### **Implications**

The results of this study show the importance of creating a home literacy environment that is rich in family activities and modeling. It is important for the teacher to encourage use of the public library as well as returning school library books weekly so children can check out a new book each week. When a new school year begins, classroom teachers and educators should highlight the importance of a home literacy environment and support families in creating one. Educators should encourage daily family reading time. Reading can be shared with an adult or a sibling. Educators should also provide ways to strengthen parental understanding of role modeling reading skills in the home. All supports can be provided through verbal conversation or written parent newsletters. As The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) pointed out, it is important to consider that not all families know and understand the importance of children being on grade level in their reading by the end of third grade. As Senechal (2006) highlighted from her research, children reading below grade level in first grade is a strong predictor of where children will be reading in fourth grade.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that educators provide family literacy supports when needed (i.e. grade level reading books) to families of children that are reading below grade level. Educators

and classroom teachers can help support the use of the public library by planning field trips to get children excited to visit the library program, especially as the summer season approaches. Teachers can also encourage children to bring their weekly library book back to school as this will increase the likely hood that children will browse books in the library and check out a book in the library that interests them. This also increases the likelihood of the child asking a family member to read the library book to them at home (or read it independently). It is also important that educators encourage parental support of school through parent communication, and encouraging parent check-ins with their child about their school day. Continuously encourage family reading together each night. Reading can be shared with an adult, older sibling, or family pet. When encouraging family reading, this study shows the importance of role modeling reading skills at home. It is important to point out to families the crucial impact this can have on first grade readers.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The entire study's external validity is low due to the sampling type. This sample of first grade children is not an indication of all first grade children. Also, the curriculum that is used, the way guided reading is taught, the type of intervention below grade level children receive, and the difference in intervention teachers is also a threat to validity. All families that completed this survey were Caucasian. All children, with the exception of one biracial child is also Caucasian. The biracial child is raised in a white home. Another external validity is effected because this is a small action research project conducted in one classroom. The study does not have an adequate idea of outside validity because sensitive questions such as parent education level and family income level were not asked. To further understand areas in the study that do not show a remarkable difference between below grade level readers and on or above grade level readers,

children in more than one classroom would need to be studied. One of the limitations in this study is the support of school section. In the classroom where this study was conducted, the families are contacted at least once a week with classroom updates. In addition, the teacher makes contact with parents for celebrations and concerns about their child. The teacher uses electronic delivery of messages, phone calls, and newsletters sent home in backpacks. If this study had been completed in multiple classrooms, perhaps the support of school score may have had a larger discrepancy.

### **Conclusion**

As identified in this study, and many other studies, the home literacy environment is a critical part of a first grade child's reading future. Educators teach children how to read, write, and spell new words daily. It is important for all parties involved in every child's education to understand the impact of home supports and parental modeling of good literacy practice. Educators can help families understand this, provide families with supports and materials, as well as show families the consistent reading growth their child is making. Further research should be conducted in a longitudinal study in the New England region beginning in kindergarten and ending in third grade. The more quality research educators have access to, the better equipped they will be to support the education of young children.



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Families spend time together in a variety of ways. For each question, rate how often you and your child engage in each activity.

[illegible]

**Activity**

	0-Never or N/A	1- Less than once a month	2- Once a month	3-Twice a month	4-Once or twice a week	5-Daily
19. We talk to our child about how they feel about their teachers and schoolmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Our child checks out books from the library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. We have favorite books that we read over and over with our child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. We visit our child's school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. We plan family activities with our child, such as meals, trips, daily schedules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Our child participates in library programs, such as summer reading programs, puppet shows, and story hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. The adults in our home use reading to learn how to do things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. We look up how to do things in books, manuals, and magazines when we make things at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. At bedtime we read to our child or they read to us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. We talk with our child about what happened at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Our child has regular tasks which they must do to help at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. We visit the library with our child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. We read books, newspapers, and other materials in the presence of our child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. We encourage our child to understand and complete school homework	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate the number of books your child owns:

- ☐ 0-24  
☐ 25-50  
☐ 51-74  
☐ 75-100 or more